

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION 7W: Central

Covers counties:

Benton, Sherburne,
Stearns, and Wright

2015 REGIONAL PROFILE

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DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION CHANGE, 2000-2014

Economic Development Region 7W – Central includes a total of 4 counties, located in the Central Minnesota planning region. Region 7W was home to 413,462 people in 2014, comprising 7.6 percent of the state’s total population. The region saw a 28.5 percent population increase since 2000, making it the fastest growing of the 13 economic development regions (EDRs) in the state, and now the third largest in total population after gaining almost 92,000 new residents. In comparison, the state of Minnesota saw a 10.9 percent gain from 2000 to 2014, meaning Region 7W accounted for 17 percent of total state growth (see Table 1).

Table 1. Population Change 2000-2014				
	2000 Population	2014 Estimates	2000-2014 Change	
			Number	Percent
Region 7W	321,795	413,462	+91,667	+28.5%
Benton Co.	34,226	39,506	+5,280	+15.4%
Sherburne Co.	64,417	91,126	+26,709	+41.5%
Stearns Co.	133,166	152,912	+19,746	+14.8%
Wright Co.	89,986	129,918	+39,932	+44.4%
Minnesota	4,919,479	5,457,173	+537,694	+10.9%

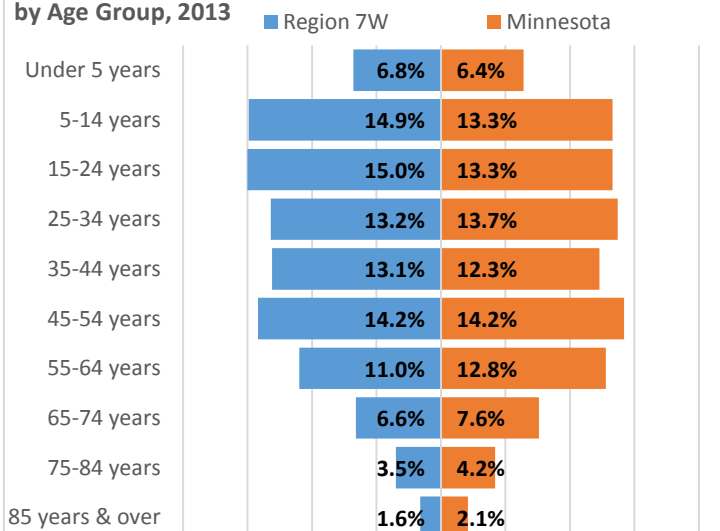
Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates](#)

All four counties in the region saw population gains since 2000, led by Wright County, which was the second fastest growing county in the state and is now the 10th largest with 129,918 people. Sherburne County was the third fastest growing and is the 12th largest in the state, with 91,126 people. Stearns County is the seventh largest with 152,912 people, and was the 16th fastest growing after welcoming almost 20,000 new residents. Benton County is the smallest in the region with 39,506 people, but is the 24th largest in the state and was the 13th fastest growing from 2000 to 2014.

POPULATION BY AGE GROUP, 2000-2013

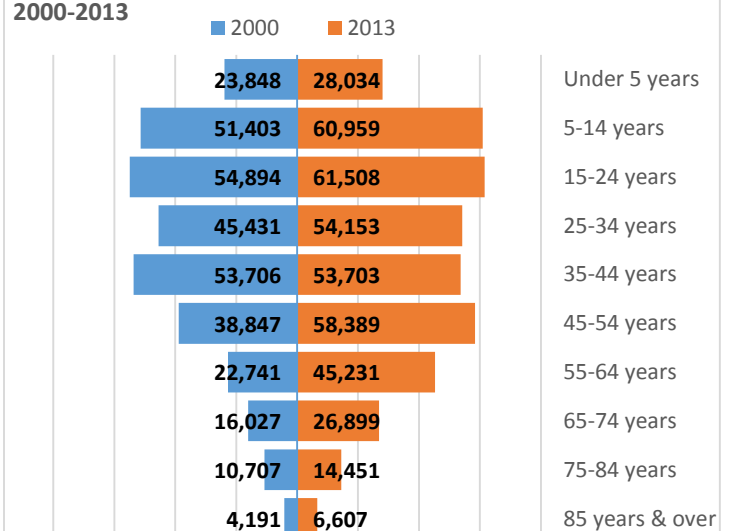
Region 7W’s population is younger than the state’s, with 36.7 percent of the population aged 25 years and under in 2013, compared to 33.0 percent statewide. Another 40.5 percent of people in Region 7W were between 25 and 54 years of age, which is typically considered the “prime working years.” In contrast, Region 7W had a smaller percentage of the population aged 65 years and over than the state, with just 11.7 percent of people aged 65 years and over, compared to 13.9 percent of residents statewide. While the number of younger residents was rising rapidly as young, married couple families moved into the region, the number of residents aged 45 years and over was also expanding quickly because of size of the Baby Boom generation – people born between 1946 and 1964 (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Figure 1. Percentage of Population by Age Group, 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Figure 2. Region 7W Population Pyramid, 2000-2013



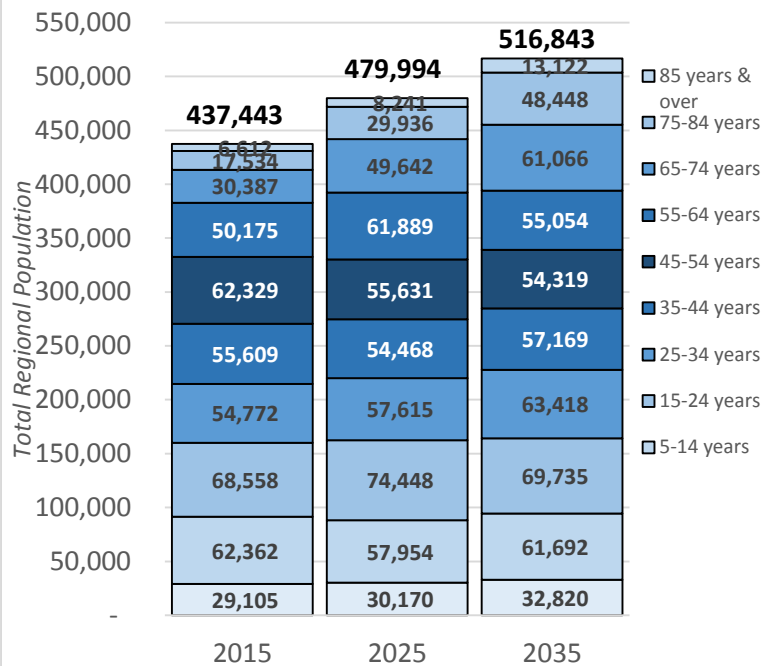
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP, 2015-2035

Region 7W is projected to enjoy continued population growth in the next 20 years as well. Though the 2015 projection is starting higher than the 2014 estimate, according to population projections from the [State Demographic Center](#), Region 7W is expected to gain about 79,400 net new residents from 2015 to 2035, an 18.2 percent increase (see Figure 3). The state of Minnesota is projected to grow 10.8 percent.

Despite the region's younger population, much of this demographic growth is expected to be in the older age groups. Region 7W is projected to add 68,000 people aged 65 years and over, a 125 percent increase. The region is also expected to gain about 10,200 people in the 25- to 44-year-old age group, as well as a corresponding increase of about 3,000 more school-aged children and almost 1,200 people from 15 to 24 years of age. In contrast, Region 7W is expected to lose over 8,000 people from 45 to 64 years of age – as the current Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid.

Figure 3. Region 7W Population Projections by Age Group, 2015-2035



Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center

POPULATION BY RACE, 2013

Region 7W's population is less diverse than the state's, but is becoming more diverse over time. In 2013, 93.5 percent of the region's residents reported White alone as their race, compared to 85.6 percent of residents statewide. Region 7W had a smaller percentage of all other race groups than the state, with the largest minority populations being Hispanic or Latino and Black or African American (see Table 2).

The region saw a 21.7 percent gain in the number of White residents, then saw much faster increases in every other race group. The number of Black or African American residents quadrupled, while people of Some Other Race, and Hispanic or Latino origin both increased about 170 percent from 2000 to 2013.

Table 2. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2013	Region 7W			Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2000-2013	Percent	Change from 2000-2013
Total	405,071	100.0%	+25.9%	100.0%	+8.7%
White	378,667	93.5%	+21.7%	85.6%	+4.0%
Black or African American	8,857	2.2%	+309.9%	5.2%	+63.0%
American Indian & Alaska Native	1,669	0.4%	+56.4%	1.1%	+4.6%
Asian & Other Pac. Islander	5,960	1.5%	+78.1%	4.2%	+56.9%
Some Other Race	3,645	0.9%	+169.8%	1.4%	+17.4%
Two or More Races	6,273	1.5%	+128.9%	2.5%	+59.6%
Hispanic or Latino	10,233	2.5%	+166.7%	4.8%	+79.3%

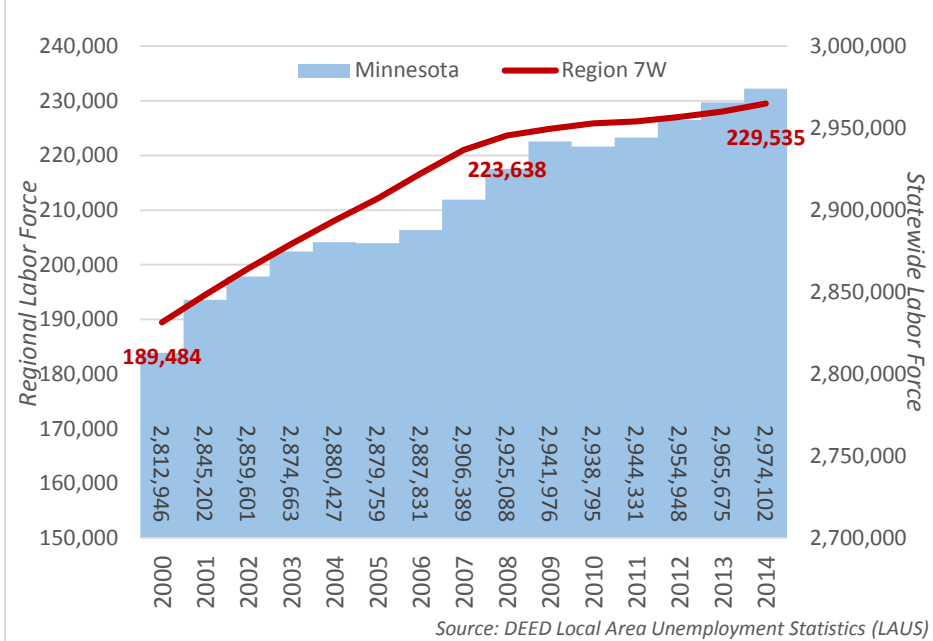
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

LABOR FORCE

LABOR FORCE CHANGE, 2000-2014

According to data from DEED's [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Region 7W has experienced rapid growth in the size of the available labor force over the last 14 years. The region had over 40,000 more available workers in 2014 than it had in 2000. As the region's population grew, so did the labor force, adding about 36,400 workers from 2000 to 2010, a 19.2 percent increase from 2000 to 2010. Labor force growth has slowed since then, with the region gaining just

Figure 4. Annual Labor Force Estimates, 2000-2014



3,700 workers from 2010 to 2014. In sum, Region 7W rose from 189,484 workers in 2000 to 229,535 workers in 2014, a 21.1 percent increase. The state was also gaining workers over the past decade and a half, growing 5.7 percent (see Figure 4). As the economy has recovered, the labor market in the region has been getting tighter, with about 9,000 unemployed workers actively seeking work in 2014.

LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS, 2015-2025

Despite the region's projected population growth, applying current labor force participation rates to future population projections by age group, as shown in Figure 3 above, would lead to much slower growth in workforce numbers in Region 7W over the next decade (see Table 3).

Though the total labor force numbers are artificially high due to the population projections shown above, the data show that the age composition of the workforce will see a significant shift over time, with a steady gain in the number of workers aged 20 to 44 years and big gains in workers aged 55 years and over, against a huge decline in the number of workers aged 45 to 54 years. The region may lose about 6,000 workers in the 45 to 54 year old age group as the Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid. The 25 to 54 year old age group will still be the largest part of the labor force, accounting for 58.2 percent of the total (see Table 3). This will likely lead to a tight labor market in the future, with employers needing to respond to the changing labor force availability.

Table 3. Region 7W Labor Force Projections

	2015 Labor Force Projection	2025 Labor Force Projection	2015-2025 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	16,758	16,931	+173	+1.0%
20 to 24 years	26,529	31,098	+4,569	+17.2%
25 to 44 years	99,233	100,763	+1,530	+1.5%
45 to 54 years	55,847	49,845	-6,002	-10.7%
55 to 64 years	36,427	44,931	+8,504	+23.3%
65 to 74 years	7,809	12,758	+4,949	+63.4%
75 years & over	1,497	2,367	+870	+58.1%
Total Labor Force	244,100	258,693	+14,593	+6.0%

Source: [Minnesota State Demographic Center, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates](#)

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS, 2013

With 73.8 percent of people aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Region 7W had higher labor force participation rates than the state's 70.3 percent. The region had higher labor force participation rates than the state in almost every age group, and the overall rate was even higher because a higher percentage of Region 7W's labor force was in younger age groups (see Table 4).

In contrast, the region had lower participation rates than the state in several race groups; and also had large unemployment rate disparities for every minority group. Region 7W had about 13,250 veterans and 10,000 workers with disabilities in the labor force, though they also had higher participation rates in the region than the state. In sum, unemployment rates in the region were highest for young people, minorities, workers with disabilities, and people with lower educational attainment.

Table 4. Employment Characteristics, 2013

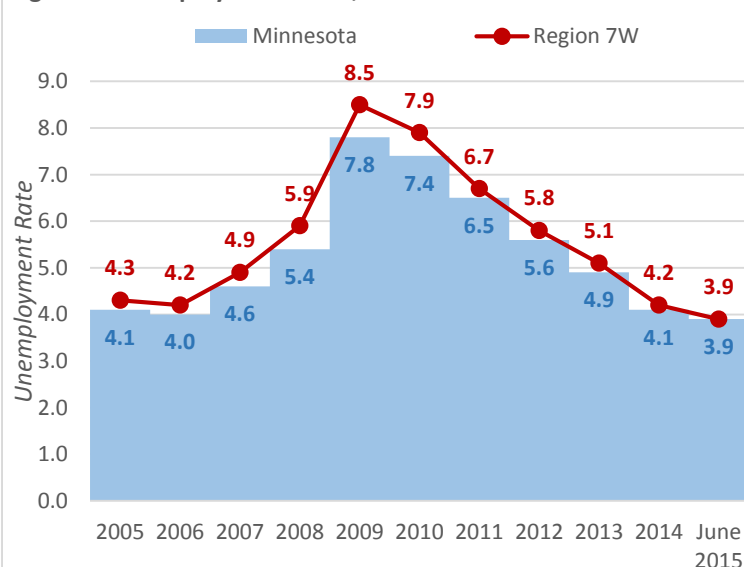
	Region 7W			Minnesota	
	In Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate
Total Labor Force	228,154	73.8%	7.0%	70.3%	7.1%
16 to 19 years	14,041	57.3%	18.0%	50.9%	20.2%
20 to 24 years	25,050	82.9%	9.2%	81.6%	11.2%
25 to 44 years	98,966	89.9%	6.4%	88.2%	6.3%
45 to 54 years	52,021	89.6%	5.1%	87.5%	5.6%
55 to 64 years	30,749	72.6%	5.6%	71.7%	5.5%
65 to 74 years	6,170	25.7%	5.6%	26.5%	4.5%
75 years & over	1,232	6.2%	12.0%	5.8%	4.6%
Employment Characteristics by Race & Hispanic Origin					
White alone	216,569	74.1%	6.6%	70.5%	6.3%
Black or African American	3,549	60.5%	22.5%	67.6%	17.5%
American Indian & Alaska Native	714	54.4%	20.0%	60.1%	18.8%
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	3,500	73.8%	11.5%	69.8%	8.5%
Some Other Race	1,807	77.0%	14.4%	77.6%	10.9%
Two or More Races	2,060	73.9%	11.5%	69.0%	14.4%
Hispanic or Latino	4,621	73.9%	12.2%	75.1%	10.4%
Employment Characteristics by Veteran Status					
Veterans, 18 to 64 years	13,252	80.1%	7.8%	77.8%	7.7%
Employment Characteristics by Disability					
With Any Disability	9,956	55.4%	12.9%	51.6%	14.6%
Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment					
Population, 25 to 64 years	181,716	86.3%	5.9%	84.2%	5.9%
Less than H.S. Diploma	8,141	74.1%	16.1%	66.9%	14.6%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	47,646	82.0%	7.3%	79.4%	8.0%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	75,667	88.1%	5.7%	85.6%	6.1%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	50,289	90.6%	3.2%	89.1%	3.4%

Source: [2009-2013 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates](#)

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, 2005-2015

Though slightly higher, Region 7W's unemployment rate has closely tracked the state rate over time, typically hovering within 0.5 percent of Minnesota's rate. According to DEED's [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), the region's unemployment rate rose as high as 8.5 percent in 2009, while the state rate climbed to 7.8 percent. Since then, the state and region's economies have recovered and unemployment rates are dropping back below prerecession levels, with Region 7W reporting 3.9 percent in June of 2015, which was identical to the state rate (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Unemployment Rates, 2005-2015



Source: DEED Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

COMMUTE SHED AND LABOR SHED, 2013

According to commuting data from the [Census Bureau](#), Region 7W is a net labor exporter, having more workers than available jobs. In fact, nearly as many residents commute out of the region than stay in the region for work. In sum, 115,470 workers both lived and worked in Region 7W in 2013, while 46,549 workers drove into the region from surrounding counties for work, compared to 88,008 workers who lived in the region but drove to surrounding counties for work (see Table 5 and Figure 6).

Anchored by St. Cloud, Stearns is the largest county and the largest employment center in the region and was the biggest draw for workers, actually seeing a net import of workers. In contrast, Benton, Sherburne, and Wright had significant labor outflows, primarily into the Twin Cities metro area as well as St. Cloud (see Table 6 and Figure 6).

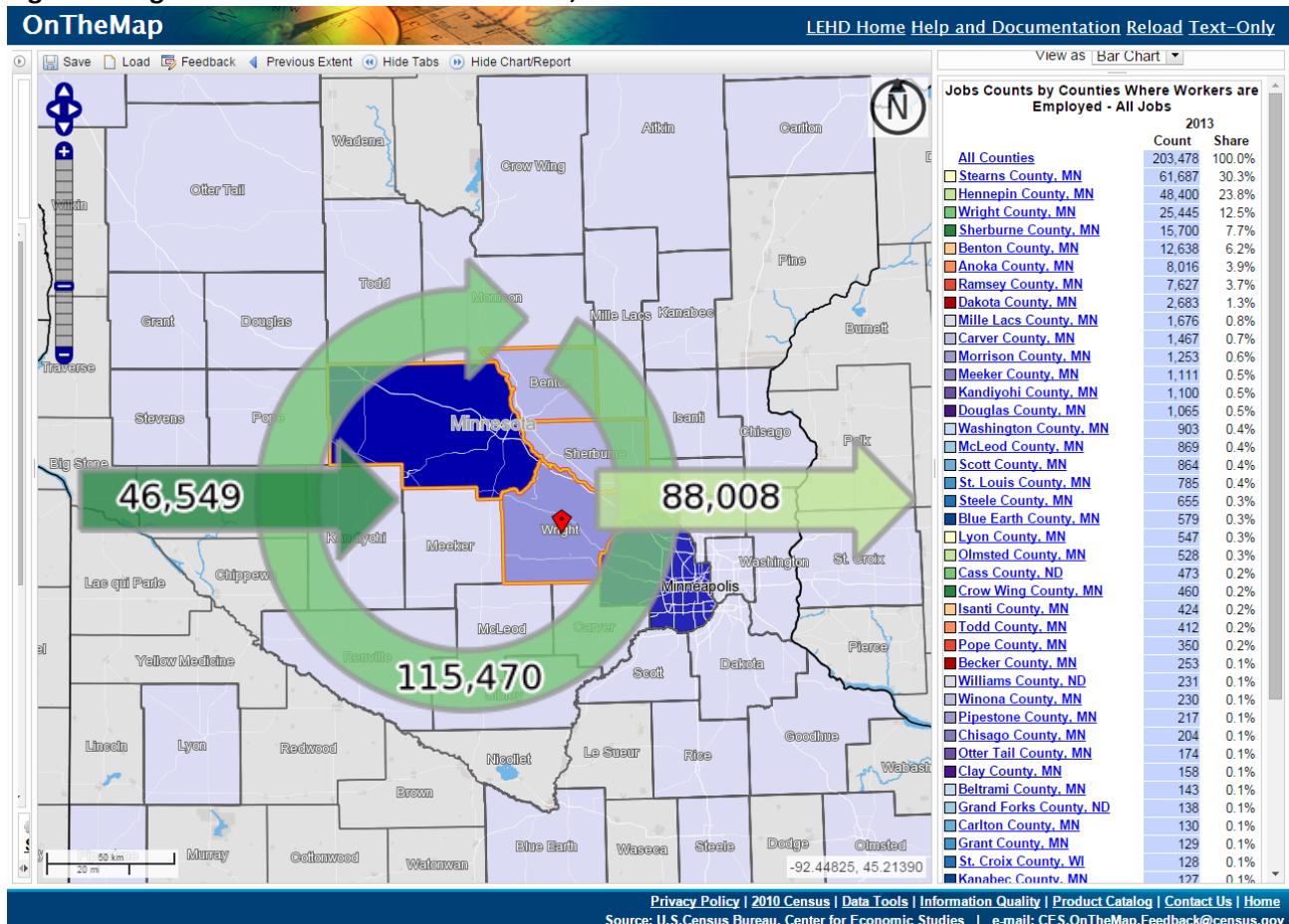
Table 5. Region 7W Inflow/Outflow Job Counts (All Jobs), 2013	2013	
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	162,019	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	46,549	28.7%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	115,470	71.3%
Living in the Selection Area	203,478	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	88,008	43.3%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	115,470	56.7%

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap](#)

Table 6. Region 7W Commuting Patterns	
Counties outside the region that send the most workers into the region	Counties outside the region that the most workers from inside the region travel to
Hennepin Co. MN	Hennepin Co. MN
Anoka Co. MN	Anoka Co. MN
Morrison Co. MN	Ramsey Co. MN
Mille Lacs Co. MN	Dakota Co. MN
Meeker Co. MN	Mille Lacs Co. MN

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap](#)

Figure 6. Region 7W Labor and Commute Shed, 2013



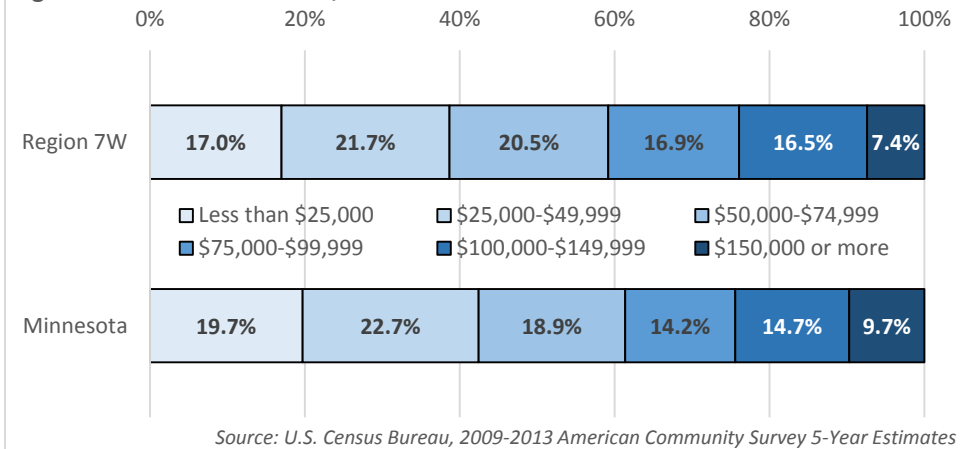
INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Household incomes were slightly higher in Region 7W than the state, where the median household income in 2013 was \$59,836. Median household incomes were \$52,200 in Benton County and \$54,551 in Stearns County, which were the 32nd and 19th highest in the state, respectively. Incomes were even

higher in Sherburne and Wright County, which ranked fifth and sixth highest in the state, respectively, at \$73,098 and \$71,598. Just 38.7 percent of the households in the region had incomes below \$50,000 in 2013, compared to 42.4 percent statewide. Another 37.4 percent of households earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in the region, compared to 33.1 percent of households statewide, and in both the state and the region, about 24 percent of household earned over \$100,000 (see Figure 7).

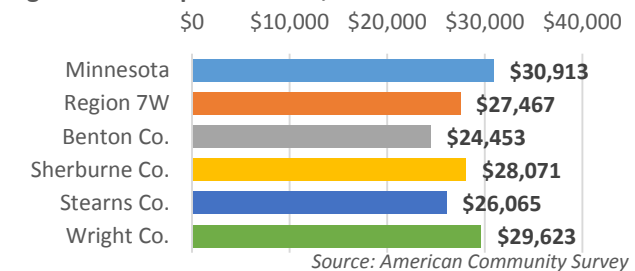
Figure 7. Household Incomes, 2013



PER CAPITA INCOMES

However, per capita incomes were slightly lower in Region 7W than the state, ranging from \$24,453 in Benton County to \$29,623 in Wright County, compared to \$30,913 in Minnesota. At \$27,467, Region 7W had the third highest per capita income of the 13 EDRs in the state, behind the Twin Cities metro and Southeast Minnesota (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Per Capita Incomes, 2013



COST OF LIVING

According to DEED's [Cost of Living tool](#), the basic needs budget for an average Minnesota family (which consists of 2 adults and 1 child, with 1 full-time and 1 part-time worker) was \$50,988 in 2015. The cost of living for a similar family in Region 7W was \$49,392 – which was also the third highest of the 13 EDRs in the state, behind only the Twin Cities metro area and Region 7E – East Central. The highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing; and the cost of the region's housing, transportation, and taxes were very similar to the state, while child care costs were the main difference (see Table 7).

In order to meet the basic cost of living for the region, the workers in the family scenario listed above would need to earn \$15.83 per hour.

Table 7. Family Yearly Cost, Worker Hourly Wage, and Family Monthly Costs, 2015

Region	Family Yearly Cost of Living	Hourly Wage Required	Monthly Costs						
			Child Care	Food	Health Care	Housing	Transportation	Other	Taxes
Region 7W	\$49,392	\$15.83	\$303	\$751	\$402	\$890	\$1,125	\$230	\$415
Minnesota	\$50,988	\$16.34	\$443	\$772	\$405	\$907	\$1,039	\$235	\$448

Source: [DEED Cost of Living tool](#)

WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

According to DEED's [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in Region 7W was \$16.80 in the first quarter of 2015, which was the third highest wage level of the 13 EDRs in the state. However, Region 7W's median wage was \$1.85 below the state's median hourly wage, equaling 90 percent of the statewide wage rate, and about \$3.70 below the median hourly wage in the 7-County Twin Cities metro area, which would amount to nearly \$7,675 per year for a full-time worker. Region 7W had higher wages than surrounding regions like Region 5 at \$14.37, Region 6E at \$16.42, and Region 7E at \$16.43, but lower wages than the Twin Cities at \$20.49 and Southeast Minnesota at \$17.74 (see Table 8).

About 11.5 percent of the jobs in Region 7W were production occupations, which was 3.5 percent more concentrated than in the state as a whole. Region 7W also had a higher share of workers in education, training, and library; construction and extraction; building, grounds cleaning, and maintenance; and sales and related occupations (see Table 9).

Table 8. Occupational Employment Statistics by Region, 1st Qtr. 2015	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment
EDR 1 - Northwest	\$16.39	36,130
EDR 2 - Headwaters	\$15.77	27,330
EDR 3 - Arrowhead	\$16.58	141,800
EDR 4 - West Central	\$15.66	83,540
EDR 5 - North Central	\$14.37	56,050
EDR 6E - Southwest Central	\$16.42	46,490
EDR 6W - Upper MN Valley	\$15.34	18,380
EDR 7E - East Central	\$16.43	44,580
EDR 7W - Central	\$16.80	172,200
EDR 8 - Southwest	\$14.79	53,380
EDR 9 - South Central	\$15.99	105,260
EDR 10 - Southeast	\$17.74	253,990
EDR 11 - 7-County Twin Cities	\$20.49	1,691,650
State of Minnesota	\$18.65	2,730,020

Source: [DEED Occupational Employment Statistics](#).

Table 9. Region 7W Occupational Employment Statistics, 1st Qtr. 2015					State of Minnesota		
	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment	Location Quotient	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment
Total, All Occupations	\$16.80	172,200	100.0%	1.0	\$18.65	2,730,020	100.0%
Office & Administrative Support	\$15.82	26,140	15.2%	1.0	\$17.27	409,100	15.0%
Production	\$15.92	19,720	11.5%	1.4	\$16.61	217,830	8.0%
Sales & Related	\$11.59	18,500	10.7%	1.1	\$13.24	270,540	9.9%
Education, Training, & Library	\$21.63	13,880	8.1%	1.4	\$22.72	156,090	5.7%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$31.94	9,970	5.8%	1.0	\$31.54	160,390	5.9%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$9.15	8,320	4.8%	0.6	\$9.21	228,640	8.4%
Management	\$39.99	8,050	4.7%	0.8	\$47.47	165,730	6.1%
Construction & Extraction	\$23.01	7,760	4.5%	1.3	\$24.88	91,240	3.3%
Personal Care & Service	\$10.91	7,620	4.4%	1.0	\$11.11	120,000	4.4%
Business & Financial Operations	\$26.75	6,070	3.5%	0.6	\$30.37	159,970	5.9%
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	\$12.69	5,780	3.4%	1.1	\$12.03	81,560	3.0%
Healthcare Support	\$13.08	5,080	3.0%	0.9	\$13.63	89,360	3.3%
Computer & Mathematical	\$29.27	2,710	1.6%	0.5	\$37.96	91,560	3.4%
Community & Social Service	\$20.96	2,550	1.5%	0.8	\$20.51	49,210	1.8%
Architecture & Engineering	\$29.25	2,140	1.2%	0.7	\$34.76	50,980	1.9%
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	\$18.73	1,870	1.1%	0.8	\$21.82	36,430	1.3%
Life, Physical, & Social Science	\$28.71	820	0.5%	0.5	\$30.29	24,410	0.9%
Legal	\$31.02	650	0.4%	0.6	\$38.48	18,330	0.7%
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	\$15.03	130	0.1%	0.6	\$14.41	3,570	0.1%
Protective Service	\$25.06	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$19.43	43,660	1.6%
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	\$20.90	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$21.52	94,310	3.5%
Transportation & Material Moving	\$15.82	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$16.18	167,130	6.1%

Source: [DEED Occupational Employment Statistics, Qtr. 1 2015](#)

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are in food preparation and serving, personal care and service, sales and related, building and grounds cleaning, and healthcare support jobs, which tend to have lower educational and training requirements. For the most part, the gap in pay between Region 7W and the state is also lower in these jobs. In contrast, the highest paying jobs are found in management, healthcare practitioners, legal, computer, architecture and engineering, life, physical, and social science, and business and financial operations, which tend to need higher levels of education and experience. The pay gaps between the region and state are much bigger in these occupations, with the exception of healthcare.

JOB VACANCY SURVEY

Employers in Region 7W reported 7,237 job vacancies in the second quarter of 2015, the highest number ever recorded. Job vacancies in the region increased 31.8 percent from the previous year, and almost 350 percent from the recession low point in 2009. Overall, 54 percent of the openings were part-time, and only about one-third required postsecondary education or 1 or more years of experience. The median hourly wage offer for all occupations was \$11.95, ranging from \$9.00 for food prep and serving related positions to \$33.92 for management jobs (see Table 10).

	Number of Total Vacancies	Percent Part-time	Requiring Post-Secondary Education	Requiring 1 or More Years of Experience	Requiring Certificate or License	Median Hourly Wage Offer
Total, All Occupations	7,237	54%	28%	33%	34%	\$11.95
Sales & Related	1,747	62%	9%	26%	12%	\$10.97
Food Preparation & Serving Related	747	72%	1%	19%	11%	\$9.07
Office & Administrative Support	652	49%	9%	26%	14%	\$11.29
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	581	67%	1%	9%	14%	\$9.97
Transportation & Material Moving	580	75%	1%	19%	71%	\$13.60
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	419	18%	63%	70%	64%	\$16.03
Production	415	13%	21%	25%	3%	\$14.84
Personal Care & Service	366	90%	56%	61%	65%	\$9.65
Education, Training, & Library	350	45%	94%	50%	82%	\$20.17
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	339	48%	94%	54%	91%	\$25.74
Healthcare Support	279	64%	65%	6%	79%	\$12.41
Construction & Extraction	192	22%	27%	47%	33%	\$15.58
Business & Financial Operations	110	24%	77%	69%	14%	\$22.54
Computer & Mathematical	98	1%	92%	67%	4%	\$22.63
Management	82	5%	88%	91%	32%	\$33.92
Community & Social Service	62	27%	92%	71%	73%	\$15.61
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	54	36%	47%	65%	46%	\$15.29
Protective Service	48	67%	0%	5%	67%	\$9.81
Life, Physical, & Social Science	45	43%	54%	99%	92%	\$10.99

Source: [DEED Job Vacancy Survey, Qtr. 2 2015](#)

OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

According to DEED's [Occupations in Demand](#) tool, there are 288 occupations showing relatively high demand in the region, with training and education requirements ranging from short-term on-the-job training to postsecondary education to advanced degrees. Many of the occupations in demand in the region require a high school diploma or less. These occupations are spread across different sectors but are also concentrated in the region's major industries. For example, food prep workers, personal care aides and home health aides, retail sales workers, truck drivers, information technology, welders, and healthcare practitioners are all occupations in demand based on the consistent need for these workers (see Table 11).

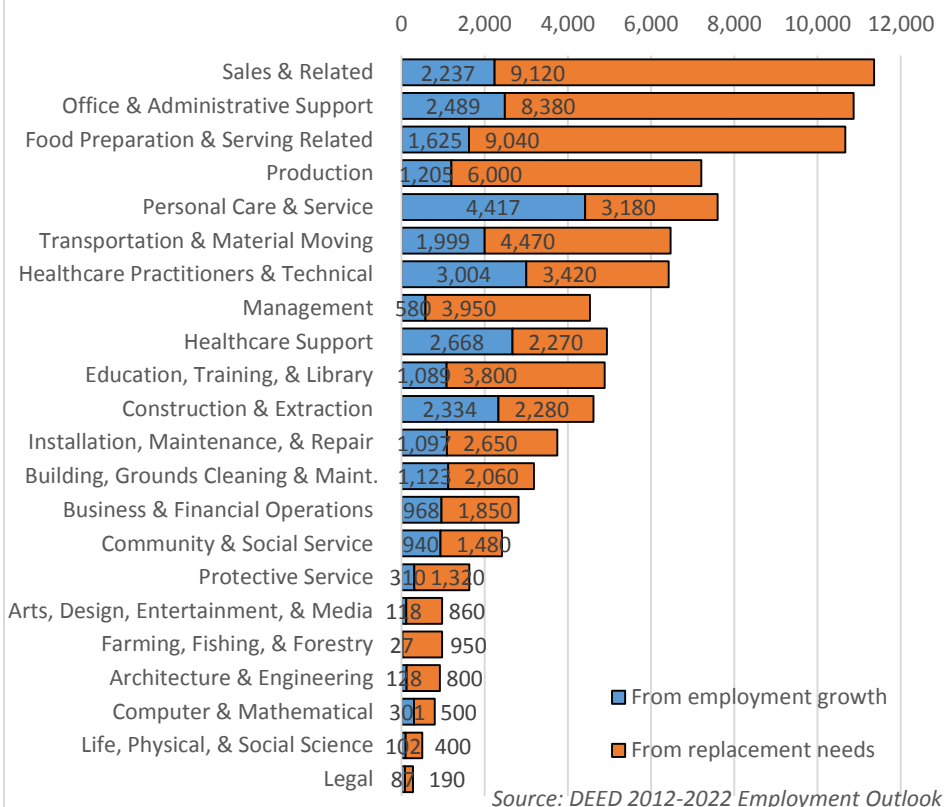
Less than High School	High School or Equivalent	Some College or Assoc. Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Combined Food Preparation & Serving Workers (\$18,042)	Customer Service Representatives (\$29,495)	Registered Nurses (\$79,021)	Training & Development Specialists (\$49,529)
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers (\$21,141)	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation Workers (\$29,579)	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (\$44,747)	Nurse Practitioners (\$105,502)
Cashiers (\$19,613)	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers (\$28,892)	Nursing Assistants (\$27,800)	Family & General Practitioners (\$190,501)
Construction Laborers (\$41,858)	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers (\$40,119)	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses (\$39,293)	Physical Therapists (\$82,839)
Personal Care Aides (\$23,075)	Carpenters (\$44,614)	Medical Assistants (\$31,934)	Software Developers, Applications (\$70,778)
Home Health Aides (\$23,257)	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General (\$41,485)	Computer User Support Specialists (\$43,888)	Industrial Engineers (\$75,886)
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers (\$23,834)	Office Clerks, General (\$29,434)	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, & Cosmetologists (\$19,550)	Accountants & Auditors (\$61,608)
Retail Salespersons (\$21,895)	Shipping, Receiving, & Traffic Clerks (\$31,258)	First-Line Supervisors of Production Workers (\$55,309)	Speech-Language Pathologists (\$68,166)
Packers & Packagers, Hand (\$19,214)	Ophthalmic Laboratory Technicians (\$27,020)	Surgical Technologists (\$48,706)	Physicians & Surgeons, All Other (\$197,983)
Laundry & Dry-Cleaning Workers (\$24,711)	Pharmacy Technicians (\$31,534)	Computer Network Support Specialists (\$50,528)	Secondary School Teachers (\$58,728)

Source: DEED Occupations in Demand

EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Region 7W is a part of the larger 13-county Central Minnesota Planning area, along with Region 6E and Region 7E. Central Minnesota is projected to remain the fastest growing part of the state, expanding 9.8 percent from 2012 to 2022, a gain of 28,848 new jobs. In addition, the region is also expected to need 68,960 replacement openings to fill jobs left vacant by retirements and other career changers. In fact, the number of replacement openings is expected to dwarf the number of new jobs in every group except for personal care and service occupations, construction and extraction workers; and healthcare support and practitioner jobs (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Central Minnesota Employment Projections, 2012-2022



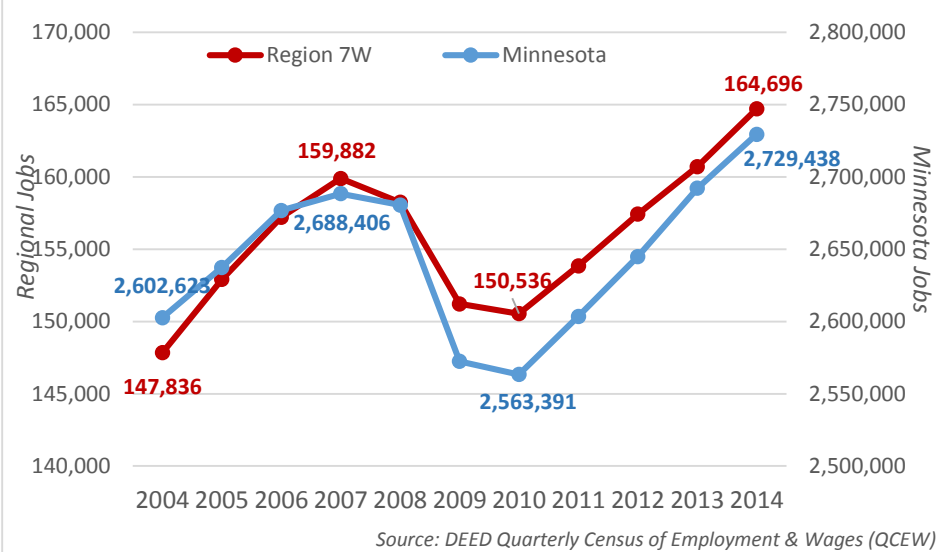
ECONOMY

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

Region 7W has seen employment ups and downs over the past decade, but ended 2014 with 16,860 more jobs than it had in 2004, an 11.4 percent increase. In comparison, the state grew 4.9 percent from 2004 to 2014. Like the state, the region suffered severe job declines in 2009 and 2010. Since then, Region 7W has seen a faster recovery than the rest of the state, which gained jobs at a 6.5

percent clip from 2010 to 2014, compared to a 9.4 percent increase in the region. Also like the state, Region 7W regained all of the jobs lost during the recession by 2013 (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Industry Employment Change, 2004-2014



According to DEED's [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\) program](#), Region 7W was home to 10,060 business establishments providing 164,696 covered jobs through 2014, with a total payroll of just over \$6.5 billion. That was about 6.0 percent of total employment in the state of Minnesota, making it the third largest of the 13 EDRs in the state. Average annual wages were \$39,572 in the region, which was about \$12,000 lower than the state's average annual wage, and the fourth highest of the 13 EDRs.

Stearns County is the largest employment center in the region and the seventh largest in the state, with 82,779 jobs at 4,247 firms; accounting for about half of the region's jobs. Wright County was the next largest, with 38,798 jobs at 3,017 firms, followed by Sherburne County with 1,858 firms and 25,832 jobs and Benton County with 17,286 jobs at 938 firms. The city of St. Cloud is located in Stearns, Benton, and Sherburne County, and is the tenth largest city in the state.

As shown above, the region recovered more quickly than the state over the past five years; with Sherburne and Wright seeing the fastest rise in jobs, combining to add about 7,200 jobs; and Stearns County gaining the most new jobs. Combined, Stearns and Benton also added about 7,000 jobs from 2010 to 2014. Region 7W also saw faster job growth in the past year than the state of Minnesota (see Table 12).

Table 12. Region 7W Industry Employment Statistics, 2014				Average Annual Wage	2010-2014		2013-2014	
Geography	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll		Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Region 7W	10,060	164,696	\$6,519,289,820	\$39,572	+14,160	+9.4%	+3,991	+2.5%
Benton Co.	938	17,286	\$611,387,839	\$35,360	+1,462	+9.2%	+528	+3.2%
Sherburne Co.	1,858	25,832	\$1,023,934,331	\$39,572	+3,529	+15.8%	+773	+3.1%
Stearns Co.	4,247	82,779	\$3,405,157,050	\$41,080	+5,485	+7.1%	+1,513	+1.9%
Wright Co.	3,017	38,798	\$1,478,810,600	\$38,064	+3,685	+10.5%	+1,177	+3.1%
State of Minnesota	164,409	2,729,438	\$140,857,248,755	\$51,584	+166,047	+6.5%	+37,321	+1.4%

Source: [DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\)](#)

With 27,530 jobs at 816 firms, health care and social assistance is the largest employing industry in Region 7W, accounting for 16.7 percent of total jobs in the region. Due to the region's population growth, the largest sectors were hospitals and ambulatory health care services, which both had around 9,000 jobs in 2014 after seeing significant growth since 2010. The region also had 5,800 jobs in nursing and residential care facilities and 4,100 jobs in social assistance, which both gained jobs over the past five years as well.

After regaining about 2,800 jobs since 2010, manufacturing is still the second largest industry in Region 7W, with 24,149 jobs at 692 firms. Wages in manufacturing were nearly \$8,000 higher than in the total of all industries. In contrast, wages were relatively low in retail trade, the region's third largest industry, with 22,802 jobs at 1,357 stores. The related accommodation and food services industry had 13,600 jobs at 708 establishments, and also had low wages. Combined those two industries added 2,300 jobs since 2010.

With one of the largest student populations outside the Twin Cities, Region 7W also has a high concentration of jobs in educational services, with 15,135 jobs at 188 institutions – primarily at elementary and secondary schools, but also at junior colleges, universities, and other schools and instruction.

The next two largest industries were the fastest growing in the region from 2010 to 2014: the construction industry built up payrolls by 35.6 percent, and now has 10,844 jobs at 1,631 firms. The administrative support and waste management services industry, which includes temporary staffing agencies, gained 1,224 jobs, an 18.6 percent increase since 2010. Other important industries in Region 7W include wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing, public administration, other services, finance and insurance, and professional and technical services. Fifteen of the 20 main industries in the region added jobs since 2010, retail trade, construction, educational services, transportation and warehousing, and public administration (see Table 13).

NAICS Industry Title	2014 Annual Data				Avg. Annual Wage	2010-2014		2013-2014	
	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Percent of Jobs	Total Payroll		Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	10,060	164,696	100.0%	\$6,519,289,820	\$39,572	+14,160	+9.4%	+3,991	+2.5%
Health Care & Social Assistance	816	27,530	16.7%	\$1,209,344,181	\$43,888	+2,783	+11.2%	+1,255	+4.8%
Manufacturing	692	24,149	14.7%	\$1,138,882,267	\$47,112	+2,798	+13.1%	+872	+3.7%
Retail Trade	1,357	22,802	13.8%	\$568,660,202	\$24,908	+1,303	+6.1%	+344	+1.5%
Educational Services	188	15,135	9.2%	\$641,772,943	\$42,588	+437	+3.0%	+177	+1.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	708	13,600	8.3%	\$178,800,843	\$13,104	+996	+7.9%	+26	+0.2%
Construction	1,631	10,844	6.6%	\$596,912,294	\$54,860	+2,847	+35.6%	+939	+9.5%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt.	478	7,810	4.7%	\$220,058,834	\$28,184	+1,224	+18.6%	-309	-3.8%
Wholesale Trade	416	6,720	4.1%	\$341,247,922	\$50,804	+819	+13.9%	+173	+2.6%
Transportation & Warehousing	441	6,233	3.8%	\$251,740,368	\$40,352	+550	+9.7%	+419	+7.2%
Public Administration	198	6,149	3.7%	\$295,680,729	\$48,048	+108	+1.8%	+132	+2.2%
Other Services	1,049	5,033	3.1%	\$118,061,912	\$23,452	+283	+6.0%	+30	+0.6%
Finance & Insurance	505	4,414	2.7%	\$245,454,801	\$55,588	+239	+5.7%	+37	+0.8%
Professional & Technical Services	677	3,553	2.2%	\$184,962,405	\$52,052	-76	-2.1%	-40	-1.1%
Information	124	2,277	1.4%	\$113,083,258	\$49,660	N/A	N/A	-137	-5.7%
Utilities	25	2,073	1.3%	\$201,731,969	\$97,396	-13	-0.6%	-61	-2.9%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	201	1,813	1.1%	\$22,712,361	\$12,532	-141	-7.2%	-49	-2.6%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	170	1,725	1.0%	\$53,063,486	\$30,888	+105	+6.5%	+20	+1.2%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	332	1,541	0.9%	\$43,976,536	\$28,496	+91	+6.3%	+97	+6.7%
Management of Companies	36	1,087	0.7%	\$81,909,135	\$75,452	-6	-0.5%	+52	+5.0%
Mining	15	203	0.1%	\$11,233,374	\$53,872	+8	+4.1%	+10	+5.2%

Source: [DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\)](#)

DISTINGUISHING INDUSTRIES

Region 7W stands out in the state for its higher share of employment in manufacturing, with specialties including furniture and related product manufacturing and nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing; as well as transportation equipment manufacturing, fabricated metal product manufacturing, animal production, and plastics and rubber product manufacturing. Located in the center of the state, the region also has strengths in heavy and civil engineering construction, truck transportation, and motor vehicle and parts dealers (see Table 14).

Table 14. Region 7W Distinguishing Industries, 2014					Avg. Annual Wages	Location Quotient
NAICS Industry Title	NAICS Code	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll		
Total, All Industries	0	10,060	164,696	\$6,519,289,820	\$39,572	1.0
Furniture & Related Product Manufacturing	337	69	1,978	\$83,582,394	\$42,224	3.5
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	327	45	1,585	\$74,105,752	\$46,644	2.9
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	336	19	1,850	\$86,291,385	\$46,592	2.7
Textile Product Mills	314	15	351	\$12,459,529	\$35,464	2.4
Heavy & Civil Engineering Construction	237	108	3,004	\$234,165,249	\$79,092	2.3
Truck Transportation	484	272	2,649	\$130,356,430	\$49,192	1.7
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	441	211	3,443	\$138,260,602	\$40,092	1.7
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	332	178	4,312	\$243,225,049	\$56,368	1.7
Animal Production & Aquaculture	112	82	1,002	\$30,836,280	\$30,784	1.6
Plastics & Rubber Products Manufacturing	326	35	1,402	\$62,381,498	\$44,512	1.6

Source: [DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\)](#)

INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS

As noted above, Region 7W is part of the 13-county Central Minnesota Planning Region, which is projected to lead the state with 9.8 percent job growth from 2012 to 2022, a gain of 28,848 new jobs.

The largest and fastest growing industry is expected to be health care and social assistance, which may account for over 40 percent of total projected growth in the region from 2012 to 2022. The region is also expected to see significant employment growth in construction, professional and technical services, administrative support and waste management services – which includes temporary staffing agencies, retail trade, wholesale trade, and accommodation and food services. In contrast, the region is expected to see declines only in information (see Table 15).

Table 15. Central Minnesota Industry Projections, 2012-2022				
Industry	Estimated Employment 2012	Projected Employment 2022	Percent Change 2012-2022	Numeric Change 2012-2022
Total, All Industries	294,407	323,255	+9.8%	+28,848
Health Care & Social Assistance	41,963	53,847	+28.3%	+11,884
Manufacturing	38,994	40,126	+2.9%	+1,132
Retail Trade	34,167	37,510	+9.8%	+3,343
Accommodation & Food Services	20,475	21,678	+5.9%	+1,203
Construction	13,987	16,879	+20.7%	+2,892
Other Services	12,001	12,809	+6.7%	+808
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt.	10,500	12,219	+16.4%	+1,719
Wholesale Trade	10,123	10,801	+6.7%	+678
Transportation & Warehousing	7,851	8,710	+10.9%	+859
Finance & Insurance	7,036	7,731	+9.9%	+695
Professional & Technical Services	5,957	6,905	+15.9%	+948
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	5,861	6,394	+9.1%	+533
Ag., Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	4,921	5,113	+3.9%	+192
Information	3,160	3,012	-4.7%	-148
Educational Services	2,629	2,865	+9.0%	+236
Utilities	2,446	2,455	+0.4%	+9
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	2,028	2,247	+10.8%	+219
Management of Companies	1,387	1,458	+5.1%	+71
Mining	268	269	+0.4%	+1

Source: [DEED 2012-2022 Employment Outlook](#)

EMPLOYERS BY SIZE CLASS

The vast majority of businesses in Region 7W are small businesses, with 54.8 percent of businesses reporting 1 to 4 employees in 2013, according to County Business Patterns from the U.S. Census Bureau. Another 31.8 percent had between 5 and 19 employees; and 11.2 percent had between 20 and 99 employees. Only 1.9 percent had 100 to 499 employees, compared to 2.4 percent of businesses in the state. Just 22 businesses in the region had more than 500 employees, which is the Small Business Administration's official cut off for a "small business". Obviously then, small businesses are vital to the region's economy (see Table 16).

Table 16. Employers by Size Class, 2013			
	Region 7W		Minnesota
Number of Employees	Number of Firms	Percent of Firms	Percent of Firms
1-4	5,646	54.8%	54.2%
5-9	1,840	17.9%	17.7%
10-19	1,432	13.9%	13.4%
20-49	853	8.3%	8.9%
50-99	298	2.9%	3.2%
100-249	158	1.5%	1.9%
250-499	45	0.4%	0.5%
500-999	18	0.2%	0.2%
1,000 or more	4	0.0%	0.1%
Total Firms	10,294	100.0%	100.0%

Source: [U.S. Census, County Business Patterns](#)

NONEMPLOYER ESTABLISHMENTS

Before growing, the basic building block of most small businesses is a self-employed business. Region 7E was home to 28,667 self-employed businesses or "nonemployers" in 2013, which are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as "businesses without paid employees that are subject to federal income tax, originating from tax return information of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)." Like covered employment, Region 7W enjoyed a huge increase in nonemployers over the past decade, responding to economic changes. In sum, the region gained 3,754 new nonemployers from 2003 to 2013, a 15.1 percent increase. The largest amount of nonemployers was in Stearns County, while all four counties saw a faster increase in self-employment than the state. These nonemployers generated sales receipts of \$1.3 billion in 2013 (see Table 17).

Table 17. Nonemployer Statistics, 2013				
	2013		2003-2013	
	Number of Firms	Receipts (\$1,000s)	Change in Firms	Percent Change
Region 7W	28,667	\$1,275,523	+3,754	+15.1%
Benton Co.	2,590	\$103,349	+279	+12.1%
Sherburne Co.	6,363	\$260,750	+793	+14.2%
Stearns Co.	10,267	\$504,235	+1,281	+14.3%
Wright Co.	9,447	\$407,189	+1,401	+17.4%
State of Minnesota	388,900	\$17,268,230	+40,173	+11.5%

Source: [U.S. Census, Nonemployer Statistics program](#)

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Finally, one other important industry in Region 7W is agriculture, with 6,377 farms producing nearly \$1.3 billion in the market value of products sold in 2012, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Region 7W had 8.6 percent of the state's farms, and 6.1 percent of the state's total market value, led by Stearns County, which ranked first out of 87 counties in the state for the market value of products sold. On a much smaller scale, Wright, Benton, and Sherburne ranked 49th, 54th, and 62nd, respectively. Despite seeing a decline in the number of farms, the region saw a 54.3 percent increase in the market value of products sold from 2007 to 2012 as many farms got bigger and commodity prices went up (see Table 18).

Table 18. Census of Agriculture, 2012			State Rank	Change in Market Value, 2007-2012
	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold		
Region 7W	6,377	\$1,292,036,000		+54.3%
Benton Co.	958	\$167,502,000	54	+47.1%
Sherburne Co.	455	\$88,512,000	62	+38.4%
Stearns Co.	3,501	\$808,498,000	1	+55.7%
Wright Co.	1,463	\$227,524,000	49	+62.4%
State of Minnesota	74,542	\$21,280,184,000		+61.5%

Source: [2012 Census of Agriculture](#)